

Land at Culls Farm, Dean Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 0PS

Design & Access Statement

5990 - PD50 | August 2020





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Design Team

Supporting information referred to in this document has been supplied by the wider design team and has been submitted with the planning application. Details of the design team are included opposite for reference.

Client	Williams Group / Oakwoods Group
Architecture	Offset Architects
Planning	Robinson Escott Planning
Quantity Surveyor	Liberty QS
Viability	Montagu Evans LLP
Agent	RPC Land & New Homes
Topographical Survey	Hook Survey Partnership
Ecology	Native Ecology
Contamination	Sevenoaks Environmental Consultancy
Drainage	Hodel Consultancy Engineers
Highways & Transport	Motion
Heritage	Archaeology Collective
Energy	Bluesky Unlimited
Landscape	JFA Environmental Planning

1.0 Introduction



1.1 Offset Architects have been appointed to prepare information to support a full plans planning application for:

Demolition of existing vehicle workshops and erection of 10No. Residential dwelling houses and 1No. Commercial unit on land at Culls Farm, Dean Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 OPS.

1.2 The scheme is a result of an in-depth, iterative, design process which had been undertaken with input from the Local Authority and wider design team and results in a sensitive scheme which responds positively to its context and provides high quality housing.

1.3 Details of planning policy are addressed in the Planning Statement produced by Robinson Escott Planning.

1.4 The statement analyses the characteristics of the surrounding area and identifies the key design issues that have been considered in preparing the scheme proposals.

1.5 The statement then goes further to explain the design strategy behind the proposals in more depth. It then concludes with a summary of the proposed project.

1.6 Prior to the preparation of a design strategy, a site visit was undertaken. From this a design solution was prepared that took into consideration the surrounding context.

1.7 The statement should be read in conjunction with the attached site photographs, as well as the associated planning drawings and supporting information as part of the application.

2.0 Site | Assessment of site and surrounding areas

2.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the attached site photographs, Topographical Survey and Planning Drawings.

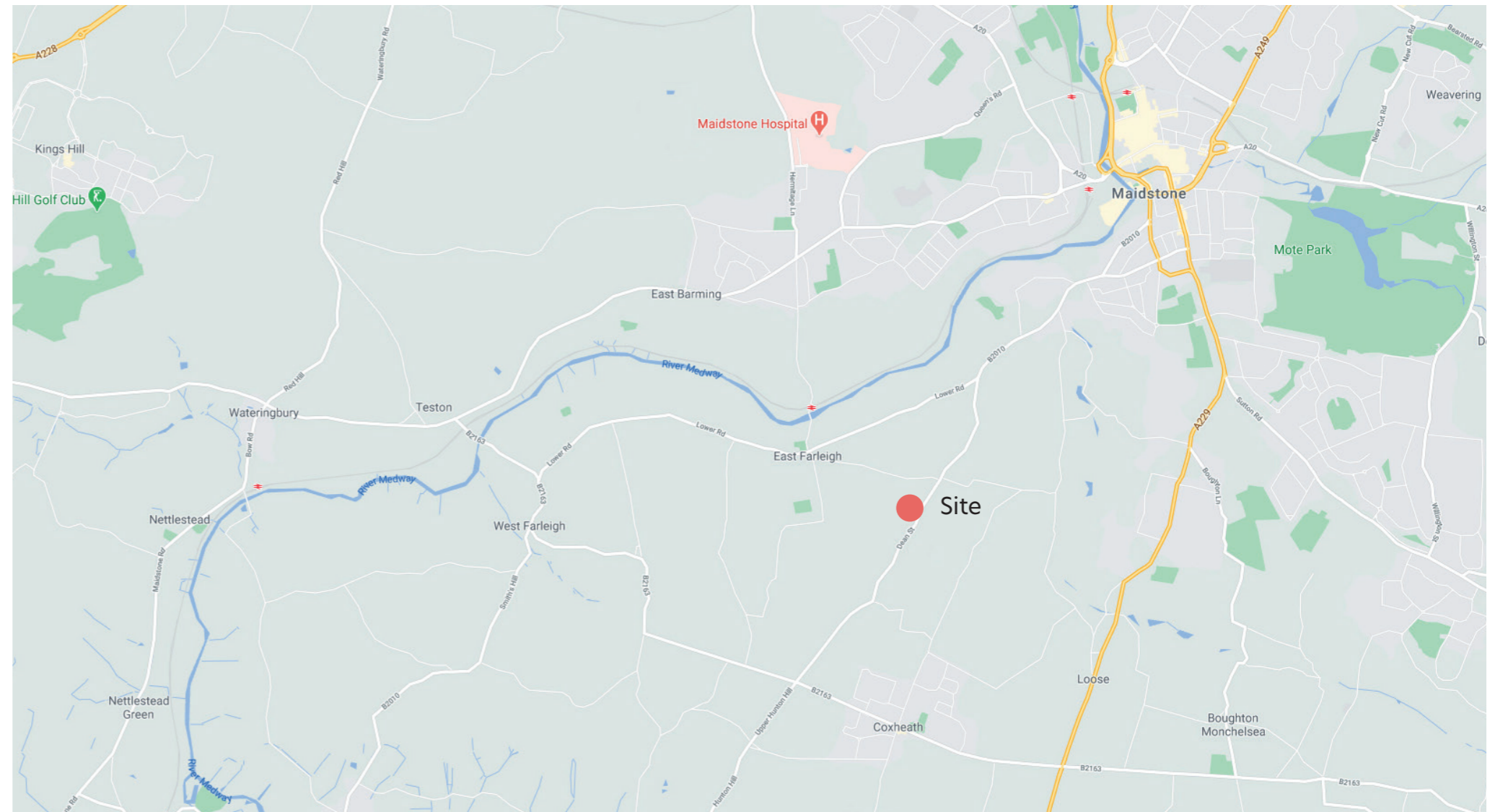
2.2 The site is located within the confines of Maidstone Borough Council. The scheme will be decided against their local policies and current material planning policies.

2.3 The site measures circa 0.75Ha and contains the following:

- 5,581m³ of existing building volume
- 112.5m² of existing building footprint
- 1,120.5m² of existing gross external area
- 5,338m² of existing hardstanding

2.4 Culls Farm is a brown field development site approximately 3.1 miles from the center of Maidstone, a 10 minute car journey, within the countryside.

2.5 The site and existing buildings are currently used for car related maintenance and sales under both Class B2 and Lawful development. There are no listed buildings or other significant conservation assets on site, the site is also outside of the East Farleigh, Dean Street Conservation Area' which lies a short distance to the north.



2.0 Site | Assessment of site and surrounding areas cont...



2.6 The site is accessed via an existing entrance road from Dean Street and is bounded by an established mixed hedge on the east. The southern boundary is defined by a standard 1.8m high close board fence as is the majority of the western and northern boundaries. The western boundary also features 2m hoarding and 0.8m metal fencing at various points along its length whilst the northern boundary has a length of 5m high cypress hedge in the north eastern corner. Existing views from the site are precluded by the height of the unbroken boundary treatments which are a result of the current use needing to be secure.

2.7 Existing buildings on site are visible in the form of glimpsed views from Dean street as you approach the site from the south but are not visible on the northern approach. This is largely due to the topography which falls by approximately 4m from the southern boundary to the northern boundary. This fall in site level means that views of the existing buildings from the south are limited to roof tops only.

2.9 There is limited soft landscape with the boundary of the site owing to the large amount of hardstanding. Existing planting is generally limited to ornamental shrubs, mown grass areas and small trees.

2.10 There are no Public Rights of Way across the site although there is an existing PROW to the north east. There are 2 bus stops, Court Lodge Farm and Forge lane, located a short walk to the north at the junction between Forge Lane and Dean Street.

3.0 Site | Photos



3.0 Site | Photos



4.0 Pre Application meeting

4.1 An initial pre application meeting was held during November 2018 with the council accepting that broad principle of redevelopment of a brownfield site was acceptable. The key points arising on design matters are detailed below:

- Compliance with Policy SP17 of the adopted Local Plan.
- Principle of replacing the current car sales business with a similar one or replacement is, in principle, acceptable in policy terms
- Policy DM5 supports this type of residential development on previously developed land where it represents a significant environmental improvement and is sustainably located.
- The density of the proposed scheme reflects the character and appearance of the locality. This is consistent with policy DM12
- Elevations in a traditional vernacular or farmstead would be acceptable.



4.0 Pre Application meeting

4.2 A second pre application meeting was held on 20.04.2020 with the council and the broad principle of redevelopment of a brownfield site was maintained. The key points arising on design matters are detailed below:

- Compliance with Policy SP17 of the adopted Local Plan.
- Replacement of the Car Sales business or similar use is acceptable in policy terms.
- Policy DM5 supports this type of residential development on previously developed land where it represents a significant environmental improvement and is sustainably located.
- Full justification needs to be given to the scheme in terms of the sites sustainability in transport terms. The scheme of 15 units could be considered less sustainable to that of fewer units - like the previously submitted scheme of 9 units.
- Volume and footprint should not be greater than the existing.
- Greater spread of buildings into areas not currently occupied by buildings will need graded justification.
- The overall development will need to better reflect the positive aspects of character and appearance of the locality.
- The layout should be more of a rural courtyard and less estate like avoiding frontage parking arrangements.
- LVIA is needed to demonstrate the new dwellings will not have a greater visual impact than the existing buildings.
- Elevations in a traditional vernacular or farmstead would be acceptable.
- A scheme of fewer, larger units might be another option worth exploring.



5.0 Layout

5.1 The site will be accessed via the existing entrance road which will be upgraded where possible. It is anticipated that vehicle journeys will fall as a result of changing the use to residential which will in turn improve highway safety at the current junction between the site and Dean Street.

5.2 Within the site a simple loop road will allow easy and safe access for residents, delivery drivers and refuse workers. Refuse vehicles are not required to turn within the site and can enter and leave in forward gear. Additional information has been submitted in support of this application, please refer to this for more detail.

5.3 Careful thought has been given to designing a composition of buildings which don't exceed the current buildings bulk and mass. These have been located so that 2 storey elements are in a position which has the least visual impact and are screened by existing planting.

5.4 The buildings in the center of the looped road are joined together to form a single composition by a boundary wall. This reflects the rag stone walling found in the conservation area. These walls are softened by planting which adds to the rural character of the development.

5.6 The buildings around the periphery of the site have been positioned to allow open views into the countryside beyond the site. These gaps in the built form create attractive courtyard like spaces in front of the dwellings which adds to the barn style aesthetic of the buildings.

5.7 The footprint of the commercial unit creates an interesting feature building which is positioned at the junction of the loop road. This means that employees do not have to drive into the depth of the site which helps to improve highway safety and unwanted traffic noise.

5.8 The open space area has been designed to include a SUDS basin to help with storm water attenuation. Its position in the layout provides views to the countryside from the loop road which helps to connect the layout to its rural setting.





5.9 The layout is included opposite, please refer to the proposed site plan drawing and other documents which accompany this application for more details.



6.0 Proposed Design Strategy | Housing Mix

6.1 As noted previously the site is currently used for Motor repairs and salves under a B2 use class and Lawful Development Certificate. This proposal seeks to change this use to C3 residential and B1(a) Business

6.2 The proposed scheme will accommodate 10no. New dwelling houses and 1no. New commercial building. The strategy diagram opposite shows how these units are spread across the site. The mix of dwellings is as follows:

-  1 x 2 bed units
-  4 x 3 bed units
-  5 x 4 bed units
-  The proposed commercial unit will total 161m² of rentable area.




Location of each unit is shown on the diagram opposite.


6.3 The varied mix of dwelling sizes allows the development to take the form of a collection of farmstead style buildings which are located around the central walled area.



7.0 Proposed Design Strategy | Parking

7.1 The proposed scheme, in compliance with Maidstone Borough planning policy provides the following level of parking:

-  20 x Allocated residential parking spaces
-  4 x Garage parking spaces
-  5 x Visitor parking spaces

-  5 x Allocated commercial parking spaces
-  2 x Wheelchair spaces

7.2 Cycles will be stored in garages or garden sheds. Space has been provided within the layout for sheds where needed.

7.3 Access into individual plots from its parking area will be level or gently sloping and each plot will have a level threshold.



8.0 Proposed Design Strategy | Refuse

8.1 Bin storage and collection locations have been fully considered to ensure that carry distances are within those recommended by the Manual For Streets. The routes of travel and locations are shown on the diagram opposite.

8.2 Each unit has a dedicated area to store refuse and recycling within its own curtilage. Where there are extended carry distances or access difficulties bin storage areas have been provided.

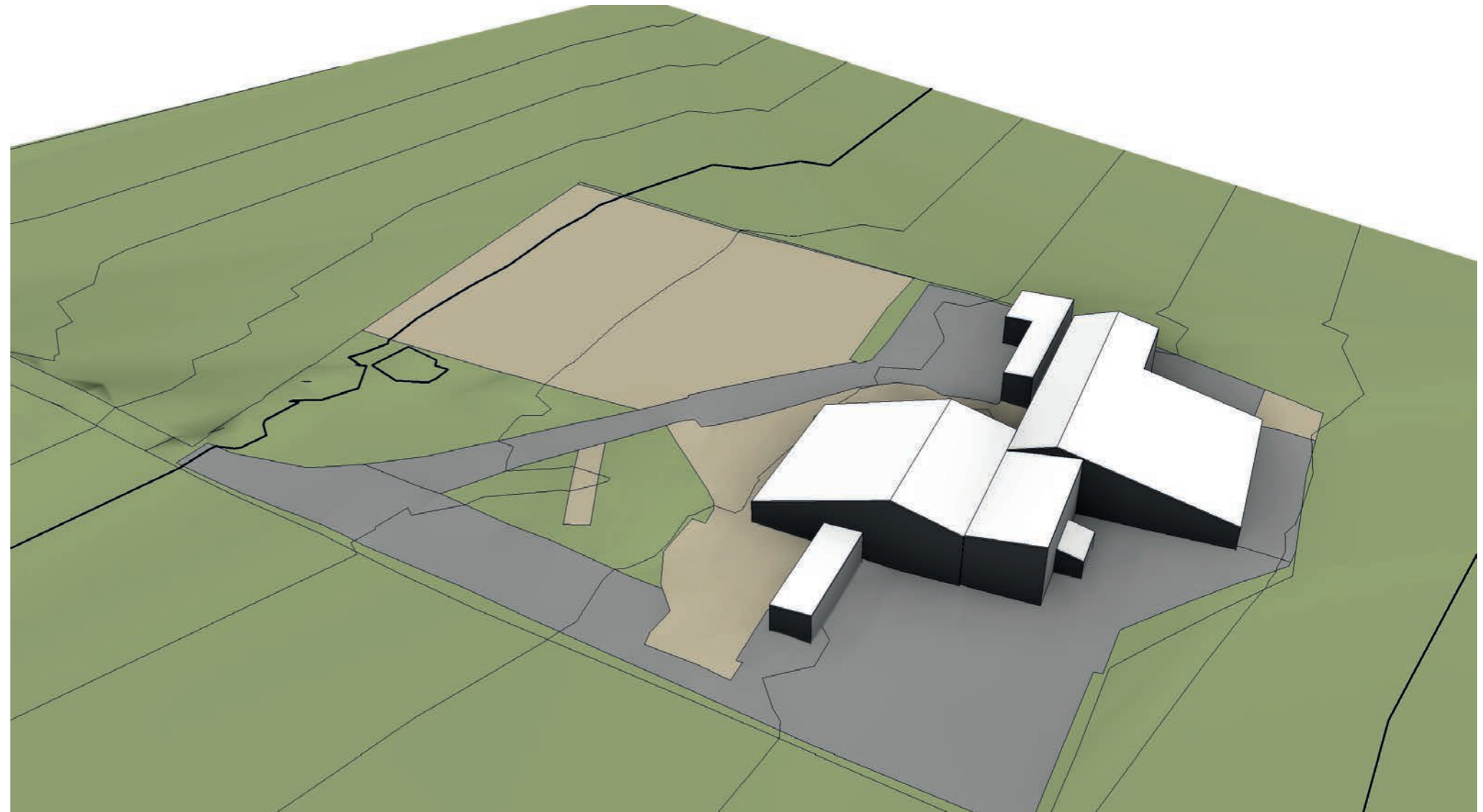
8.3 As the site lies in a rural location with well sized garden spaces it is anticipated that many of the units will have additional garden waste bins. Additional space has been allowed for the storage of these.



9.0 Proposed Design Strategy | Massing

9.1 The extent of the existing buildings is detailed below, following pre-application advice and good design practice we will be using these as a guide to ensure that proposed development is of an appropriate scale.

- 5,581m³ of existing building volume
- 112.5m² of existing building footprint
- 1,120.5m² of existing gross external area
- 5,338m² of existing hardstanding



9.0 Proposed Design Strategy | Massing

9.2 The proposed scheme can be compared to the existing with the following details:

- 5,580m³ of proposed building volume
- 967m² of proposed building footprint
- 1,766m² of proposed gross external area
- 3,381m² of proposed hardstanding

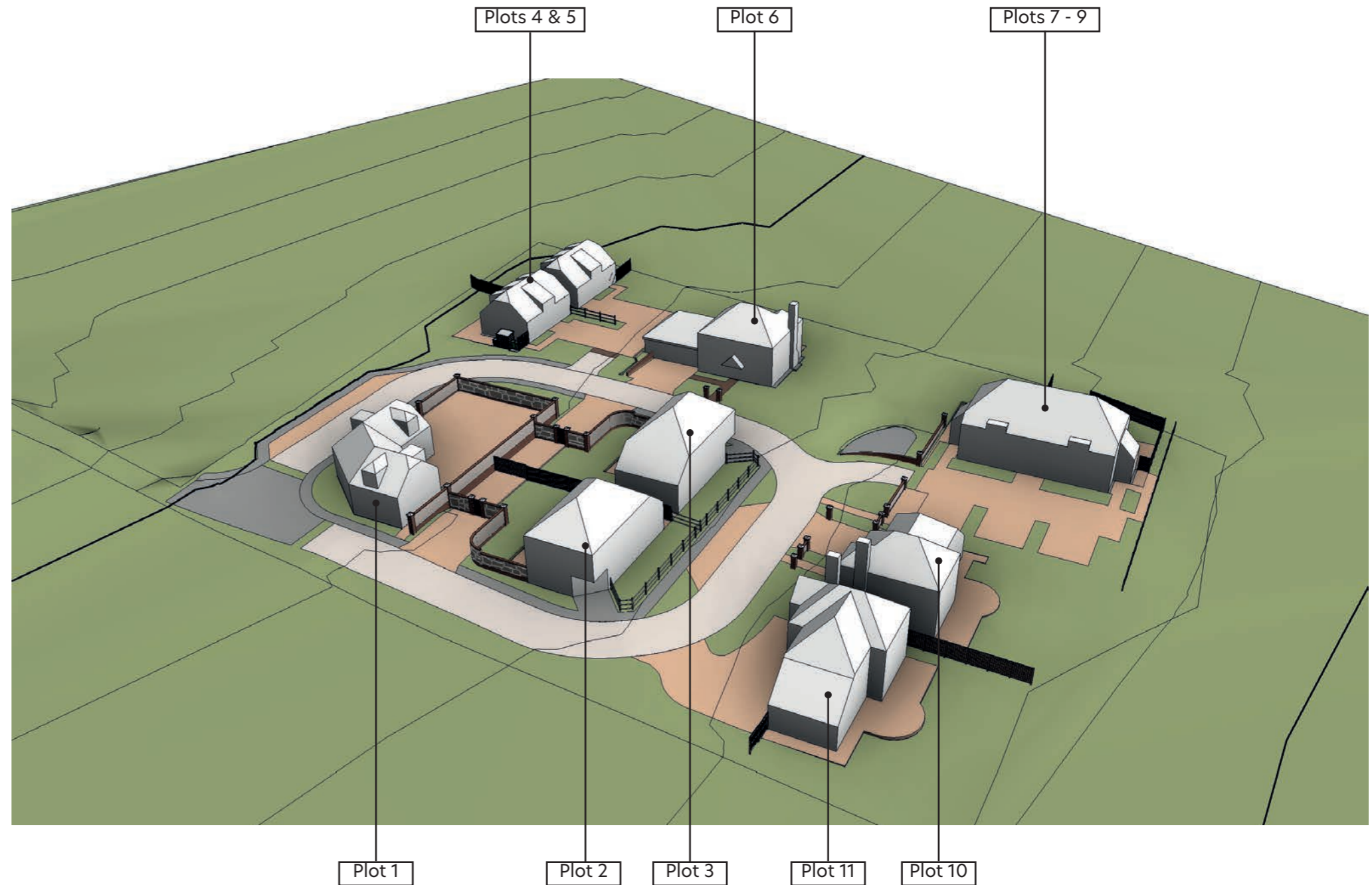
9.3 This represents a reduction in volume, footprint and hardstanding. Gross external area increases due to the units being 1.5 or 2 storey. Individual building sizes have been detailed on drawing number PD09 which accompanies this application.

- 0.1% reduction in volume
- 14% reduction in footprint
- 36% reduction in hardstanding

- 57% increase in gross external area

9.4 The reduction in hardstanding and footprint will allow greater areas of landscape to be established within the site and will improve surface water run-off rates and bio diversity.

9.5 The proposed scheme represents a density of 13.3dph based on the gross site area of 0.75Ha. Whilst this is well below the accepted development density of between 30 and 40dph the rural setting of the site and it's context demand a significantly lower density.



10.0 Landscape

10.1 The site is currently predominantly covered in hardstanding. This is a combination of tarmacked, concrete and unmade, graved, ground. Currently only around 29% of the site contains soft landscape features.

10.2 There are no protected trees on site and much of the planting is low quality ornamental shrub planting. The greatest interest comes from the mixed boundary hedge which flanks the eastern boundary. This is being retained.

10.3 A number of the existing trees are to be removed to facilitate development. These are all small specimens and will be replaced in the new planting scheme.

10.4 As a result of the proposal there will be a 36% reduction in hardstanding bringing opportunities to significantly improve the landscape.

10.5 The landscape strategy has been included opposite, please refer to this and other documents which accompany the application for full details.




11.0 Sustainability & Energy

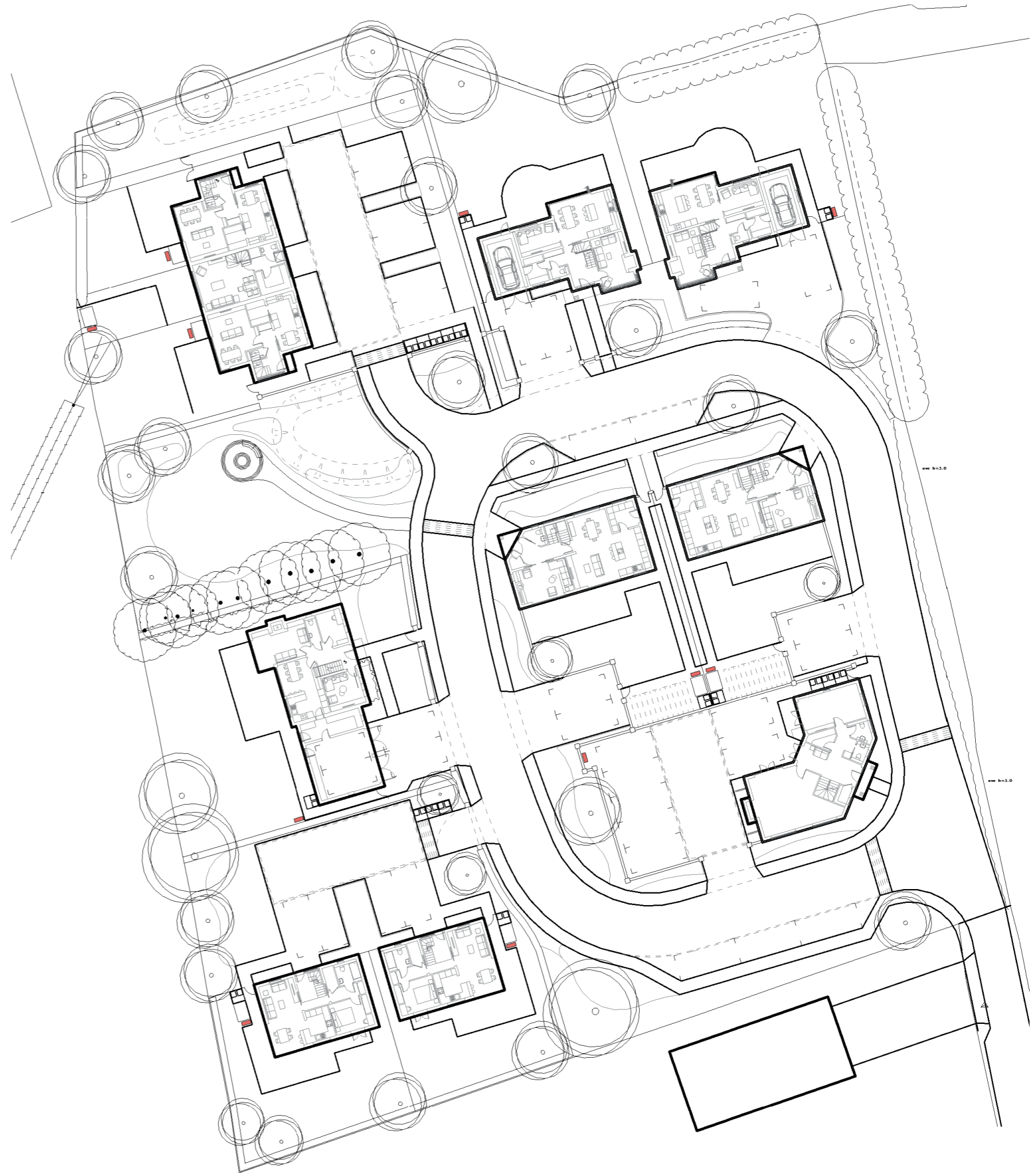
11.1 The proposals promote sustainability by using energy efficiency, low-carbon and renewable technologies.

11.2 Improved building fabric have been designed to achieve a 55% improvement over the current building regulation requirements. Air source heat pumps will be used to provide both hot water and space heating with water efficiency measures ensuring that water usage will be less than the 110 litres per person per day and achieves the enhances standard required by the building regulations.

11.3 The sustainability and energy measures incorporated in the design proposal achieve a reduction of 30.63% over the building regulations baseline. Full details of the approach can be found in the Sustainability and Energy Statement which accompanies this application.

11.4 The location of air source heat pumps is shown on the diagram opposite, details of their enclosures accompany the application.

 Air source heat pump locations



12.0 Appearance

12.1 The existing buildings on site are of no particular architectural merit all being agricultural and predominantly constructed from concrete panels and steel.

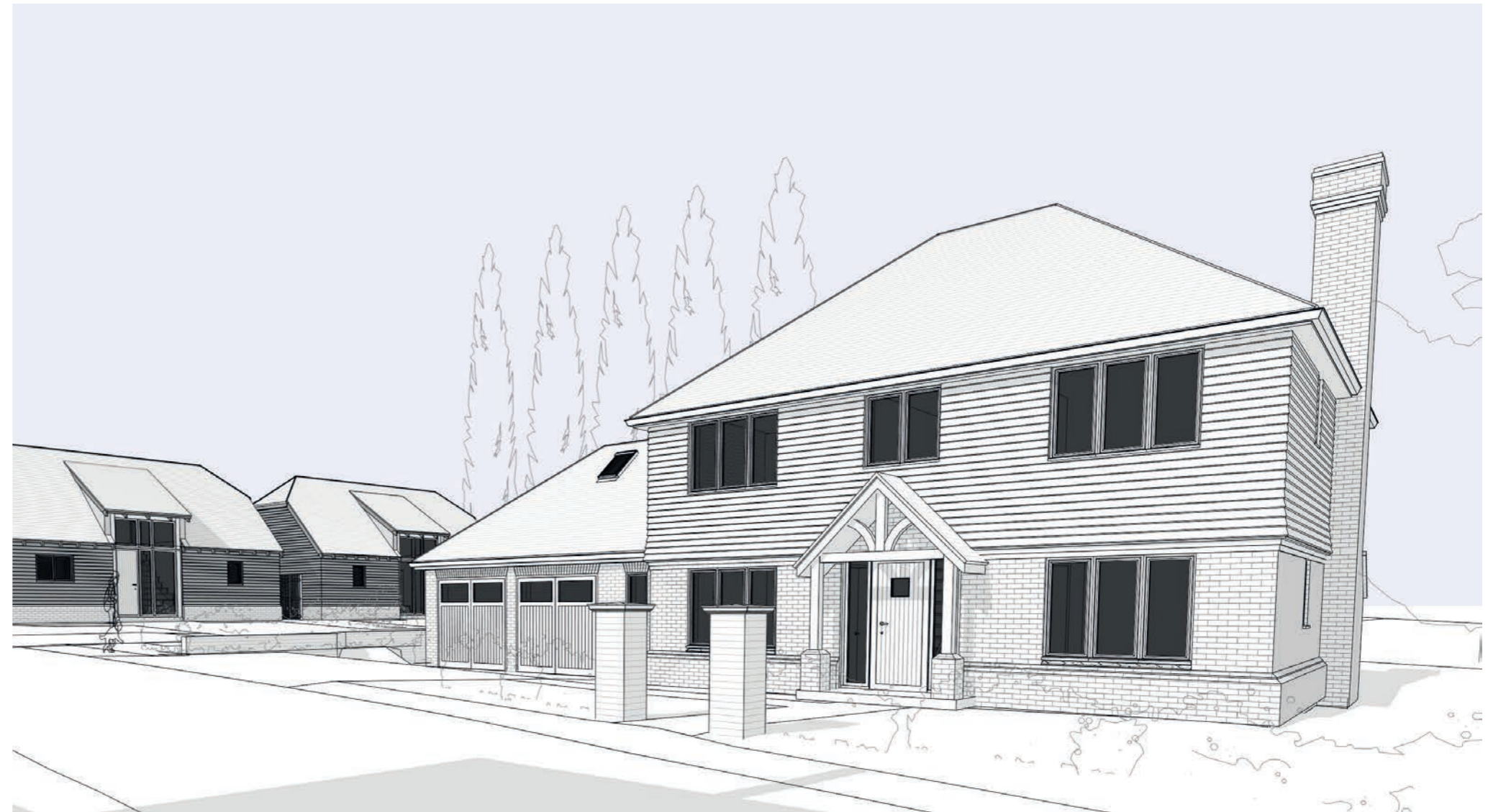
12.2 Whilst all of the buildings on site are single storey the agricultural nature of them mean that they are much taller than a typical single storey building.

12.3 The proposed buildings borrow many of the features seen in the conservation area located to the north of the site. Notably there is a strong presence of rag stone walling which is seen both in the buildings but also the boundary walling which defines Dean Street.

12.4 Plot 1:
Faces the main entrance corner with a good sized entrance porch feature with rag stone cladding and red brick detailing to its front façades and a clay pitch roof with hipped dormers. It is a 1 storey building with rooms in the roof to keep the height down and takes the form of an attractive estate office building.

12.5 Plots 2-3:
These take the form of two large hay barns behind Plot 1. They are 2 storey in height with a low eaves and slate pitch roof with barn-Hips. A cat-slide roof to breaks up the bulk and forms an interesting context to the centre of the site. The façade will have a brick base in line with the adjacent boundary walls and black weather boarding above.

12.6 Plots 4-5:
These are low level barn structures with rooms in the roof and cat-sliding dormers and entrance feature. Boundary planting will limit its visual impact on the surrounding context. Its materials of red brick plinth, black weather boarding under a slate roof also allow it to blend in with its rural context.



12.0 Appearance

12.7 Plot 6:

This represents the main farmhouse property, with a low hipped roof that reduces down above the garage and utility, reducing its visual impact. This unit has a palette of red brick and tile hanging under a clay pitch roof with oak porch and doors.

12.8 Plots 7-9:

This block has been designed again in the form of a supporting rural barn with red brick plinth and black weather boarding façades under a slate pitch roof. By adding two lean-to extensions either side we create more private entrances to each property and retain a barn-type feel to the form.

12.9 Plots 10 & 11:

These are 4 -bed detached property over 2 storeys with a cat-sliding roof over the integral garage. Plot 10 has brick and tile hanging façades under a hipped clay pitch roof and Plot 11 has a rag stone detail to the front with a gabled main façade under a clay pitch roof. These plots occupy an area of the site which is well screened by the cypress hedge which will minimise visual impact.



13.0 Summary

13.1 The proposed scheme looks to replace the existing buildings with 10no. New family homes and 1no. Commercial building. It has been shown that this will result in a reduction in built volume, footprint, and hardstanding.

5.3 The design of the scheme takes inspiration from the wider locality and Dean Street Conservation area, with materials specification and some detailing reflective of the attractive neighbouring properties. The proposed new properties are considered to enhance the local area and will result in the removal of poor-quality features such as the poor quality warehouse style barns on the site.

5.4 The proposed design looks to address comments made during the pre-app process relating to how the application should demonstrate that the development would not have a greater impact on the countryside than the existing building arrangements.

5.6 The site has been developed so that it has a rural appearance. This is defined by the materials specification, the shape and form of the buildings, post and bar fences along with all of the additional landscaping throughout the site.

5.7 The scheme will result in significant improvements to the site from what is currently a rather unattractive developed plot of land which in no way enhances the countryside. The proposals will result in 10 new family homes as well as a new commercial building which maintains employment within the site.

5.8 Given the limitations on volume, footprint and density this proposal makes the best use of the redevelopment opportunity provided by this site.

